PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Enhancing Community College's Services for the Aging is a project of the Div. of Continuing Education, New York City Community College. It is the major segment of The Institute of Study for Older Adults which offers courses to the aging in senior centers, residence homes, nursing homes, and other areas of concentration of older adults.

The goals of the program are to:

1. Bring education to our senior citizens in their community.
2. Stimulate, train and create an understanding among faculty and staff of community colleges in New York City to develop education programs and services for senior citizens in their community.
3. Train the aged themselves to develop leaders to assume responsibility for educational programs in collaboration with community colleges, neighborhood associations and other agencies.
4. Conduct seminars and conferences with a variety of participants including our students, teachers, other educators and public officials in order to study the needs of older adults for Continuing Education, improve the quality of our services to older adults, and help develop a pedagogy for the older adult.

The seven other CUNY community colleges have joined New York City Community College in bringing classes to senior citizens in all five boroughs of New York City. There are now 78 centers offering over 90 courses and involving 5,000 senior students in the program.

This Program is Funded under contract with the New York City Department of Aging through the Older Americans Act Program administered by the New York State Office for the Aging.

DAILY NEWS

MAY 10, 1975

News photo by Marco Vega

Mary Beame presents certificates for completion of two college-level courses offered by New York City Community College to Joseph Schoenberger, 101, at Jewish Home and Hospital for Aged.

Star Student, 101, Improves With Age

By STEVEN MATTHEWS

Joseph Schoenberger offered living proof yesterday that you're never too old to learn.

In a special ceremony at the Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged, Schoenberger, a retired diamond setter who turned 101 on March 26, received two certificates from Mary Beame signifying his completion of two college-level courses offered by New York City Community College.

To the applause of his classmates, whose average age is 84, Schoenberger told Mrs. Beame that he was looking forward to taking more classes next year.

"I still would like to learn," he said "You never get enough learning and I learn more with each year."

Described by one of his former teachers as "unbelievably alert, responsive and aware of issues," Schoenberger has taken four courses at the home, at 120 W. 106th St.

5,000 Took Courses This Year

Last year, he took classes titled "Current Events" and "Youth in America." This year, the sessions were "War and Peace in the Middle East" and "Human Relations," which was described as elementary psychology.

The courses, which meet for nine sessions apiece, are taught by faculty members of the community college at the home and at 80 other centers for the elderly throughout the city. They are sponsored by the institutions, the college and the Mayor's Office for the Aging. More than 5,000 persons were enrolled in the program this year.

One of Schoenberger's classmates, Sara Scholland, who is 95, described the classes as "a bonanza — they keep us out of the bedroom and the dining room."

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

MAY 10, 1975

The New York Times

Rose Berger, center, and Marvin Stark, right, singing "Ain't She Sweet" during a choral performance at graduation exercises in the Jewish Home and Hospital for Aged on West 106th Street.

101 Is Age of the Student, Not Number of the Course

By IRVING SPIEGEL

"I can never get enough to learn," Joseph Schoenberger said yesterday, "and I learn more with the passing years."

Mr. Schoenberger, a retired diamond setter, is 101 years old. He was one of forty-three graduates of a nine-week course on "Illusions of Peace in the Middle East," given by Ira Hirschmann, author and former Ambassador to Turkey, and human Relations," given by Richard Mays, a psychologist.

The setting was the auditorium of the Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged, 120 West 106th Street, an agency of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York. The home has 444 residents, including the mercurial Mr. Schoenberger. During an earlier semester, Mr. Schoenberger, of trim white moustache and clear, unfaltering speech, had completed courses on "Watergate" and "China Today."

Mr. Schoenberger's classmate, 78-year-old Mrs. Rose Berger, also received a certificate.

Questions Asked

"The mind has to be nourished," she remarked. "These courses are by far the best nourishment."

Mr. Schoenberger nodded in vigorous agreement. "How right, how right she is," he said. Robert Disch, an instructor during the previous semester, pumped Mr. Schoenberg's hand. "This man," he said, gesturing toward Mr. Schoenberger, "is unbelievably responsive and aware of everything. I gave a course in human relations, and boy and man, the questions he asked."

Beaming with pride was Mrs. Anna Viruet, supervisor of recreation at the home. "He loves to go on trips," she said, "and his love of opera equals his love for knowledge."

In his day, Mr. Schoenberger has heard such operatic greats as "Nellie Melba, Adelina Patti, Enrico Caruso, Jean de Reszke and his brother Edouard de Reszke."

"They were electrifying," says Mr. Schoenberger.

Born in Budapest on March 26, 1874, Mr. Schoenberger came to this country when he was 16 years old and lived in upper Manhattan. He is a widower. The home is one of 81 centers that give courses for elderly people, with the courses sponsored by New York City Community College's Institute of Study for Older Adults. The average age of the students at the home is 84.

For 83-year-old Nathan Nichols, the valedictorian of the group, the commencement was an occasion for some particular observations. "This is not a home touched by recent reports," he remarked without benefit of prepared text. With minute regard for detail, he listed the home's many activities and described the medical supervision, the "nurses who are always on duty."

"We love every minute here," he said.

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THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR Monday, May 19, 1975

Elderly shine at school

New York institute offers 160 courses for 5,000 retired people

By Ronald Gross
Special to The Christian Science Monitor
New York

"These courses are the best thing that has happened to me in 50 years," says 96-year-old Sarah Schottland. "My studies have made a new woman out of me."

The senior student is one of 5,000 retired people who are participating in the Institute of Study for Older Adults. This exceptional program offers courses anywhere in New York City where a sufficient number of prospective students want them. This year more than 160 courses are available, ranging from home nursing and health needs, to a video workshop and a course on organizing for "senior power."

The institute is operated from New York City Community College in Brooklyn. But instead of just offering courses on the Brooklyn College's campus, it reaches out into retirement homes, senior centers, and any facility where older people can come together. The city's other seven public community colleges have joined the program by providing faculty members. The cost works out to $32 per student, annually.

Courses proposed

"We take our lead from the older people themselves," says Peter Oppenheimer, the institute's director. "They propose or at least select the courses they want for their group. Our students are not constrained by the need to accumulate credits or earn a degree. They are freer than are younger students to study what they want, at their own pace. There is no reason for them to keep coming unless they find what's being offered useful, interesting, and life-enhancing. We do everything we can to stretch their minds, but we don't ask for homework or give tests or grades."

The most popular offerings are in basic psychology, basic English, sociology, current events, and Spanish. A typical course, in current events, took place at a senior citizen's center in Brooklyn. The participants were all women between 50 and 70 and most of them simultaneously were taking a course in basic psychology. Meeting once a week for nine weeks in 1½ hour sessions they focused on clippings from current newspapers and magazines, selected for their timeliness or interest to members of the class.

"Though the format was open," explains the teacher, "the discussions tended naturally to focus on a few key questions. We kept coming back to the "American dream," the idea of progress, how society makes decisions about new scientific and technological developments, 'future shock.' " After each formal session, the participants would linger over snacks. Many made new friends in the course of the series.

Of course, older people going back to classroom learning often have concerns and problems. Teachers of institute courses are trained to keep in mind that most of the students have not attended school for 40, 50, or up to 70 years. "Returning to formal education after such a lapse of time," the teachers are cautioned, "requires a great deal of courage on the part of the students. It is important to support them as they face this threshold problem."

New students do tend to be shy and a little scared. But most of them are soon emboldened by their teacher's responsiveness and nonauthoritarian attitude. One teacher who'd been having difficulty getting her class moving suddenly found herself under attack when one of the lectures — on how Sweden treats its old people — was challenged as outdated by some of the students. When they demonstrated that they were right, and she accepted their findings, others in the class became more assertive.

Discussion encouraged

"Remembering their past schooling, many older adults think of the classroom as a place where they sit and listen in awed silence," says Harry Moody, another of the institute's teachers. "They approach 'the professor' with awe. I make it a point to encourage interruptions, discussion, and a free-wheeling atmosphere. I stress that the greatest resources in the room are each of their personal experiences with life, people, and ideas."

For many of the students, participation goes further than taking courses. A number have found that "consciousness-raising" offerings spurred them to join groups like United Senior Citizens and the more militant Gray Panthers. One class — the video workshop — taped a college seminar on death and dying for health professionals, then afterward sat down with the participants to critique the seminar.

The program's expansion has been remarkable. Starting only three years ago with four centers and 200 students, the institute now has 50 sites and more than 5,000 registrants. "We think we've found a pattern which could serve older people in other big cities," says Mr. Oppenheimer.

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Brooklyn Public Library Bulletin

Brooklyn, New York Volume 32, No. 4 April/May, 1975

Senior Citizens Attend Classes At Brighton Beach and Greenpoint

Two branches of the Brooklyn Public Library, the Brighton Beach and Greenpoint Libraries, are now holding free classes for senior citizens. The courses, which began in mid-March, are co-sponsored by the New York City Community College's Division of Continuing Education. The nine-session courses feature College personnel as instructors.

The Brighton Beach Library is offering a Current Events class, spotlighting news events as they relate to the senior citizen. At the first session, held on March 12, the class members and the instructor agreed to discuss such subjects as crime and gun control, politics and older people (touching on health, housing, Social Security, etc.), the economy, wealth and power in America and the United States' involvement in international affairs. The teacher at Brighton Beach is Robert Diech, a sociologist with his M.A. from Columbia. Mr. Diech previously taught at Pratt and other local schools.

The Brighton Beach course was originally scheduled for one hour and a half session per week. However, an enthusiastic response to the class and an unexpectedly large enrollment (over 100) resulted in the class being split into two one hour sessions per week.

At Greenpoint, where the class began on March 18, the subject is "The Last Forty Years." The instructor, Armin Rosenblatt, received his Ph.D. in American History from St. John's University and taught in the Social Science Department at the New York City Community College for nine years. Dr. Rosenblatt is leading his class in discussions of the last four decades in America, with emphasis on the impact of national and international events on the local scene. The 35-person class will meet on Tuesdays from 2:30 to 4 p.m.

The courses, which were open to all individuals aged 60 and over, are made possible by funds available under contract with the New York City Office for the Aging as part of the Older Americans Act Program administered by the New York State Office for the Aging. At the conclusion of each course, a certificate of completion will be issued to each class participant meeting the class requirements. While registration for these two classes is now closed, it is hoped that future funding will be available and that they will serve as pilot courses for other such classes to be held at branches of the Brooklyn Public Library.

The Current Events class meets at the Brighton Beach Branch. At front are instructor Robert Diech and librarian Selma Wilcox, coordinator of the Brooklyn Public Library's Senior Citizens' programs.

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STATEMENT OF DR. B. BAGCHEE

I am thankful to the Senate testifying committee on Higher Education for their invitation and opportunity to appear before them at the City University in New York on 11th. June 1977.

I, Dr. Biswa Bagchee, a Naturalized Citizen and a Professional Medical Consultant, Administrator, Civil Leader cum Priest, residing at 42-30, 82nd Street, Elmhurst, New York, 11373—testify as follows:

You all are aware that opportunities for education, specially the right type of education, were extremely limited during our younger days. As such, even though I earned the sheep-skin of Medical Practice at a comparatively young age, my desire for further studies never abated. Paucity of funds and facilities, forced me to earn and learn at the same time, as early as the 1920's, when such a term was unheard of in India. And am glad to testify that neither poverty, lack of opportunities or age stood on my way and I finally arrived in Great Britain around the thirties. Later on to the U.S.A. earning my Masters Degree from the St. Louis and Washington Universities when I was about 46. About the same time, I was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, London in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene and a Corresponding Member of the Swedish Dermatological Society, Stockholm. Being an Academicia ever since, I have worked my way up, receiving several Citations and awards including a 3 year term in the Medical Corps with last posting with the Commonwealth Forces & Re-occupational troops, under General MacArthur in the S.E.A.C. World War II. These various experiences, widened my horizon all the more and despite so many ups and downs, I worked up a Doctoral courses, some 18 years later, including a Honorais Causa Degree in 1976. Even now, I am so anxious to learn—as the more I am learning, the more I am thinking how much there is to learn.

It is my feeling, one is not really old, as long as he is seeking something to satisfy his desires and ambition. A man is as old as he feels. Imprints of age, are discernible only on body but not on mind—unless one infringes the natural laws of health. In youth, we learn and in age, we understand. I am before you gentlemen and am sure, it would be extremely difficult to guess my correct age. Considering these facts, to get well started in life many of us had to sacrifice our desires & ambitions for the sake of the family and the younger generation. So, I strongly recommend, the doors be wide open to those elderly, who could afford or are anxious to pursue a course in Continuing Education. There should be no red-tape or rig-ma-role about his cash or credits. It should be made available free, with added incentives for his extra zeal and energy at the last innings of his life.

In addition, I further feel these Senior Citizens should be provided all facilities of a Concessional/discount Meals and Nutrients at the Cafeteria a free Medical check-up and a free transport, if possible. The present law entitles them anyway—only it has to be co-ordinated. The greatness of a countrys administration and its people, are tantamount on its laws to administer justice, especially in how we treat and care for our women, children, sick and elderly. There is no gainsaying of the fact that the presence of a only few mature men in the class-room or the campus, would further enhance the family image of mutual love and appreciation thereby go a long way in narrowing the generation-gap which is disrupting our life today. Therefore, I strongly urge the Honorable Members of the Committee, to lend their unanimous support of this Bill—with a reply to me, if possible about their recommendations.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE,
Washington, D.C., June 9, 1977.

To: House Postsecondary Education Subcommittee.
From: Education and Public Welfare Division.
Subject: The Senior Citizen Higher Education Opportunity Act (H.R. 3542).

This memorandum is divided into three parts—Part I consists of a section-by-section description of H.R. 3542; Part II raises technical questions about the bill (questions of definitions, etc.); and Part III provides arguments for and against the proposed legislation.

PART I—SECTION-BY-SECTION DESCRIPTION

There are nine sections in H.R. 3542—there is no Section 1; Section 2 constitutes the substantive language of the bill; and Sections 3 through 9 amend certain titles of the Higher Education Act, tying eligibility for funding under those titles to adherence to the provisions of the Senior Citizen Higher Education Opportunity Act.

Section 2.—This section adds a new section to Title I (Community Services and Continuing Education Programs) of the Higher Education Act of 1965. H.R. 3542 designates this new section in Title I as Section 114. This conflicts with the current numbering of Title I sections because the Education Amendments of 1976 redesignated Section 113 as 114. Despite this problem, we will refer to the new section as Section 114.

Section 114 (a) would prohibit the payment of Title I funds to any institution of higher education (regardless of size) if the institution has not fully implemented a senior citizen access plan.

Section 114 (b) makes eligibility for funds available under Titles I, II (Parts A and B), III, V–VIII, and X of the Higher Education Act contingent, for each institution with an average enrollment of more than 5,000 full-time students (or equivalent in part-time students), upon the implementation of a senior citizen access plan.[1] Such plan must provide for the registering of qualified senior citizens without charge or tuition (except as provided in Section 114(c)(2)) for scheduled classes and programs on a space available basis.

Section 114(c)(1) authorizes the Commissioner of Education to issue regulations necessary to implement this program.

Section 114(c)(2) provides that the regulations shall include such provisions as necessary to allow institutions to assess registered senior citizens for fees not in excess of the actual administrative costs of enrolling such individuals (but not including any cost of conducting their classes or programs).

Section 114(d)(1) defines "qualified senior citizens" as an individual sixty years of age or older who has completed all course requirements for enrollment in the scheduled class or program.

Section 114(d)(2) specifies that a class or program has "space available" if it is not fully subscribed by students other than nonpaying senior citizens.

Sections 3–9.—These sections amend the various titles of the Higher Education Act affected by Section 114. There is a problem with Section 5 which amends Section 508 of the Higher Education Act. The Education Amendments of 1976 deleted Section 508.

PART II—TECHNICAL QUESTIONS RAISED BY H.R. 3542

The following questions do not address the merits of this proposal; rather they are restricted to problems of a technical nature which would arise if H.R. 3542 were enacted into law as presently written. They are not presented in any particular order of importance.

(1) Who determines that an institution has space available in a course or program which is to be filled by qualified senior citizens? If this determination is made by individual institutions, it is likely that it will not be made in any nationally consistent fashion. But, if this authority is given to the Commissioner of Education, he will be faced with the choice of implementing either a flexible policy for determining if space is available (one that recognizes institutional administrative diversity), or a more rigid policy (one that establishes some national standard for such determination). The bill provides no guidance for the Commissioner if it is in fact his choice.

(2) When would the availability of space be determined? Often institutions permit a period of flux at the outset of a semester, quarter, etc., during which students can change their schedules. If determination of available space is made before that period is over, it is possible that paying students who enroll for classes after the initial registration period would demand space that might already have been alloted to nonpaying senior citizens.

[1] The names of these titles are as follows: Title II (College Library Assistance and Library Training and Research), Title III (Strengthening Developing Institutions), Title V (Teacher Corps and Teacher Training Programs), Title VI (Financial Assistance for the Improvement of Undergraduate Instruction), Title VII (Construction, and Renovation of Academic Facilities), Title VIII (Cooperative Education), and Title X (Establishment and Expansion of Community Colleges).

(3) What would be the enrollment status of the senior citizens? Senior citizens could be enrolled as auditors, or as non-degree-credit students, or as degree-credit students, etc. Their enrollment status will affect the treatment they receive in the classroom and on campus in general. Auditors would not make the same demands on institutions as degree-credit students. Tests, for example, might not have to be administered to them. If credit is to be given, how will senior citizens be able to earn degrees if they enroll only in classes that have available space, not those which are necessary to complete degree programs?

(4) What provisions would be made for courses or programs which have special fees, such as lab fees, associated with them? The bill states that only the costs of enrolling these students can be charged to them (excluding any costs of conducting such classes or programs). Among the arguments against the bill (presented below) the issue of cost incurred by enrolling nonpaying senior citizens is raised.

(5) What impact will this legislation have on an institution's ability to decide not to offer an undersubscribed course or program? Some classes may be held on a paying basis. Only if the enrollment is sufficiently large to justify them financially will they be held.

PART III—ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST H.R. 3542

The following arguments are presented in the form they might take if advanced by proponents or opponents of the bill.

Arguments for H.R. 3542

(1) Given that the elderly portion of our population is growing, it is in our best interest to offer to these individuals as many opportunities for improving themselves, for developing new skills and interests. Higher education offers many of these opportunities. Many of these senior citizens are retired and thus may have the time to engage in higher education study. But, they are often on fixed budgets rendering them unable to afford such education. This bill recognizes senior citizens as a national asset and seeks to extend to them the benefits of higher education on a tuition-free basis.

(2) H.R. 3542 makes use only of student space already allotted for courses and programs, and thus does not increase the cost incurred by educational institutions. These spaces are already budgeted for. The administrative costs of enrolling the senior citizens can be charged to them.

(3) The requirement that a higher education institution's eligibility for Federal funding be contingent upon its conforming to Federally specified demands is not unprecedented. Many of the antidiscrimination rules, regulations, orders and legislation enacted by the Federal government impose certain requirements on educational institutions under the penalty of the loss of Federal funding. For example, employment practices of these institutions are affected by the Equal Pay Act, Executive Order 11246, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, etc.

Arguments Against H.R. 3542

(1) H.R. 3542 singles out a particular segment of our population and extends to them tuition-free higher education. Why do senior citizens merit this treatment to the exclusion of other segments of our population? Why should the senior citizens who could afford to pay the tuition and fee charges enjoy free higher education? Those qualified senior citizens who cannot afford this education are likely to be eligible for Federal student assistance. It might also be asked how many qualified senior citizens are unable to participate in higher education through the many programs currently offered by institutions.

(2) H.R. 3542 does not take into account the various ways that institutions of higher education construct and determine their budgets and the ways that classroom space enters into those considerations. The bill assumes that all institutions do in fact budget a number of spaces for each class and that all costs for classes are fixed. It assumes that, on the margin, additional students do not increase costs of operation for the schools. These assumptions are clearly open to question. Presumably senior citizens will be using the physical facilities of the institution (such as the library, swimming pool, etc.), adding to the depreciation of the institution's physical plant. Presumably some classes which attract senior citizens will have to be held in larger classrooms, in several sections, etc., thereby increasing the costs of providing these courses or programs.

An under-subscribed course can be held in a smaller classroom, etc. (This does not address the problems which would arise if H.R. 3542 were in fact to prevent an institution from canceling an undersubscribed class.) The essence of this argument is that one additional student does in fact represent increased costs beyond those administrative costs which can be charged to senior citizens.

(3) The issue of Federal requirements having an impact on the practices of higher education is not one laid to rest by citing precedents. Tuition-free education for the elderly cannot be construed as a civil right for these citizens. Providing for the welfare of our elderly is in the national interest, but so is maintaining a system of higher education that is financially sound and as unencumbered with Federal requirements as possible. Providing for the welfare of our elderly through tuition-free, unreimbursed higher education brings these two national goals into conflict.

CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ'S REPLIES TO TECHNICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SENIOR CITIZEN HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY BILL

Question 1. What does space available mean? Do college courses have pre-set sizes?

Answer. The size of almost all college courses is set in advance on the basis of curriculum needs and budgetary considerations. For example, labs close at, say 20 students, big lectures may close at 200, etc. If a course closes at, say, 50, and only 30 students sign up, then clearly there is space available. In the vast majority of cases, the determination would be simple and clear-cut.

Question 2. Would the institutions have to add additional sections or hire additional graders in large lecture courses because a number of senior citizens enrolled?

Answer. No. If there were not space available in existing sections, senior citizens could not enroll. I plan to amend my bill to make clear that institutions would not have to undertake additional costs to accommodate senior citizens, other than those covered by the administration fee.

Question 3. Will the bill prevent institutions from dropping an undersubscribed course if a number of senior citizens have enrolled in it?

Answer. No, it could still drop an undersubscribed course. The amendment mentioned above would apply to this situation.

Question 4. How will senior citizens be able to earn degrees? Required courses may not have space available.

Answer. Most senior citizens will probably not work toward degrees. Those who do would have to pay for required courses if there were no space available.

Question 5. Who would determine that a class has space available?

Answer. The institution itself. Of course, any institutions which consistently reported no or almost no space available would be open to suspicion of noncompliance and might be investigated by the Federal agency in charge of assuring compliance.

Question 6. When would the availability of space be determined—before or after the period of flux at the outset of each semester or quarter?

Answer. This could easily be handled, for example, by signing up the senior citizens on a waiting-list basis and then formally registering them at the very end of the flux period if there were still space.

Question 7. Will senior citizens have to pay special fees, like lab fees?

Answer. Yes.

Question 8. Would senior citizens be eligible to participate in or utilize campus health services, counseling services, etc. which are available to other registered students?

Answer. No, other than the library. * * *

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